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## DNR gives public tour of gravel pit

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By Crystal Hayduk, Special Writer

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The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment hosted a meeting on March 13 at the Gerald Eddy Discovery Center in Chelsea to clarify information regarding the details of the land agreement between the state and Aggregate Industries.

As a result of receiving numerous questions, Ray Fahlsing, stewardship program manager, suggested inviting neighbors of the gravel pit's properties to an informational meeting and tour of the land that will be leased from the state.

"We had lots of spirited questions from the 49 people who attended the meeting," DNRE representative Paul Yauk said. "Ray reviewed the stewardship plans of the 324-acre gift to the state by AI and the 72.44-acre land that the state will lease back to AI, with the planting plan. He also showed pictures of other sites that had been restored through similar arrangements with the state."

Geologist Tom Hoane of Grand Rapids discussed the unique geological formation of the area, which is part of a band that ranges from northern Ohio to Lake Huron.

Ted Beals of the Waterloo Township Planning Commission agreed that the site is special from a geological perspective.

"That specific parcel sits right on the edge of two major watersheds in Michigan," he said. "To the east, the water flows into the Huron River system into Lake Erie, and to the north and west it flows into the Grand River system ending in Lake Michigan, and just a little south the water flows into the Raisin River."

Yauk said that the state is pleased to obtain the private land within the Waterloo Recreation Area, and that there will be no net loss of land available for recreational use as the gravel pit continues operations for the next 10 years or more.

As AI finishes mining specific portions of land, reclamation of the land will commence, according to Yauk. Under the new contract, both the state and the township would require performance bonds to ensure that funds to complete the reclamation will be available.

Residents' questions focused on the impact of gravel operations extending toward their Clear Lake properties. Other questions related to Clear Lake water levels, the effect on private well water quality, travel on Green Road, the removal of forested hills on the lease land, and the location of some trails that will be moved.

Representatives of the DNRE plan to research the answers to the questions and disseminate future information in writing.

No further meetings are planned; however, the DNRE will answer questions. Questions can be e-mailed to Paul Yauk at [YAUKP@michigan.gov](mailto:YAUKP@michigan.gov) or by calling 1-517-335-4824.

Following the meeting, 24 residents went with state representatives on a walking tour of the area. Yauk said that the elevations are relatively high in that area, and residents were concerned about loss of elevation. Yauk replied that although some hills will be removed, the highest elevations would be maintained.

Despite Yauk's description of what the area will look like following reclamation, Beals said that he thinks it will become more of a "contoured valley."

Mike Sadler, township supervisor, believes the grade will become more pronounced, with a lower valley and the same elevation.

"From my understanding, they are not mining the peak," he said.

Crystal Hayduk is a freelance reporter for Heritage Newspapers.

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